

P-04-556 No to Junction 41 closure – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 03.11.15

Dear Committee Members,

Firstly I would like to convey my thanks to your committee for again taking the time to discuss the petition against the closure of Junction 41. In addition I would like to thank the minister for taking the time to answer some of our concerns.

Unfortunately, again I have been asked to respond to comments within a short timeframe. This has not allowed me to meet with members of the Action Group or to form a thorough rebuttal of the points made in her response.

This being the case, I will merely make some general observations for your consideration:

1. I agree that the completion of the peripheral distributor road allows some local traffic to enter or leave the town without recourse to the motorway at junction 41. After all, who would wish to access a congested motorway when other routes are available?

The problem lies in the following issues:

* Traffic from Cwmafan and the valleys north of the motorway cannot easily access the distributor road. It is fine for east/west traffic but is inaccessible and impractical for other traffic, especially when the junction is closed. Accessing this new road westbound involves negotiating three roundabouts and traffic lights, and then at least another handful of roundabouts before reaching the motorway at junction 43. Drivers WILL take preferred routes through the town. Eastbound traffic will go through the town streets to access the motorway at junction 40.

* Increased traffic merging onto the motorway at junction 43 when junction 41 was closed has caused chaos and, in fact, tailbacks moved from J41 to J43.

2. I reiterate that the benefit to average journey times is minimal (obj2) and still feel that the effect on local traffic was under-recorded and therefore that the 'balance of overall monetized journey time' is not a true reflection of the situation.

3. I accept that the traffic flow through Port Talbot at peak times can be slow. Indeed, I regularly travel westbound on the M4 and can see the issues for myself. However, I would like to make two observations on this:

* Quite often, the traffic jams westbound begin at Junction 43, not at Junction 41 although traffic reports often cite J41 as causing the tailbacks.

Eastbound tailbacks have worsened since the introduction of the enforcement cameras and this is the case whether the junction is open or closed. Most local people are glad to make use of the distributor road to avoid this congestion.

Has the use of the distributor road at peak times been assessed?

* We still feel that there are strong alternative options for easing the congestion, particularly the use of the slip roads, a solution rejected on monetary and safety issues. The Smart Motorway initiatives encourage this type of solution to congestion.

In conclusion, I and other members of the action group and the Chamber of trade hope that you can see that we remain strongly opposed to any closure of junction 41. We are always keen to meet with those responsible for these decisions so that we can put our points across,

Again, thanks for listening

Rose David (petitioner)